United Nations E/CN.6/2004/NGO/19

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 January 2004

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Forty-eighth session
1-12 March 2004
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* * *

* E/CN.6/2004/1.

04-21238 (E) 100204

According to statistics from the United States Department of Health and Human Services, as of the end of 2002, an estimated 42 million people worldwide – 38.6 million adults and 3.2 million children younger than 15 years – were living with HIV/AIDS. Approximately 70 percent of these people (29.4 million) live in Sub-Saharan Africa; another 17 percent (7.2) million live in Asia. Of the estimated 15,603 AIDS-related deaths in the United States in 2001, approximately 52 percent were among blacks, 29 percent among whites, 18 percent among Hispanics, and less than 1 percent among Asians/Pacific Islanders and American Indians/Alaska Natives.

The Department further confirms that racial and ethnic minority populations in the United States, primarily African Americans and Hispanics, constitute 57 percent of the more than 800,000 cases of AIDS reported to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) since the epidemic began in 1981. African Americans make up almost 38 percent of all AIDS cases reported in the United States, yet according to the United States Census Bureau, they comprise only 12 percent of the United States population. Hispanics represent 18 percent of all AIDS cases and are approximately 13 percent of the United States population. Injection drug use is a major factor in the spread of HIV in minority communities. Other factors contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS in these communities include men who have sex with men (MSM) and increasingly, heterosexual transmission.

The Center for Disease Control reports that:

As of December 2001, African Americans and Hispanics represented 52 percent of AIDS cases reported among males and 78 percent of those in females;

As of December 2001, 58 percent of all women reported with AIDS are African American and 20 percent are Hispanic;

African American children represent 58 percent of all pediatric AIDS cases;

Of the 175 pediatric AIDS cases reported in 2001, 139 (79 percent) were in African Americans and Hispanics;

AIDS is the leading cause of death among African-American men ages 25-44.

The work of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. in prevention and "wellness" translates into health education programs, health laws and provision of health care services for those in need. Delta Sigma Theta Sorority supports medical research that examines illnesses that victimize specific segments of the nation's population, particularly African Americans.

Through the work of the chapters of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., located around the world, the Sorority is taking a major leadership role in educating the global community on how to decrease the AIDS pandemic, thus promoting health and wellness and eliminating the destruction of African American families. Statistics convey that there is a disproportionate occurrence of the AIDS disease among African Americans. AIDS is among the ten leading causes of death for African American women of all ages and the second most frequent cause of death for African American women of childbearing age.

As part of the Sorority's Summit V: Health and Healing initiative, the 900-plus Delta chapters conduct ongoing HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention programs.

According to the United States Surgeon General, the HIV/AIDS epidemic "has evolved from one centered on white gay men to one increasingly impacting people of color, women and the young". For this reason, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. has chosen to continue Summit V: Health and Healing. The Sorority's effort focuses on an intense HIV/AIDS Education Campaign. It began by encouraging local chapters to implement internal educational awareness workshops. This enabled the Sorority members to better understand the

drastic impact HIV/AIDS is having on African American women of all ages and youth. In addition, for the past three years, chapters have participated in the Sorority's International Day of Service for HIV/AIDS (IDS). This public awareness program ranges in activities from letters and telephone calls to policymakers to organized rallies, testing and screening, counseling, and fund raising events. Summit V: Health and Healing is a means through which Deltas throughout the world assist in:

- Informing and educating the public and families about women's health issues;
- Developing community partnerships to help inform the public and provide access to services;
- Providing leadership for supporting policy development, promoting and enforcing legal requirements that protect the health and safety of women; and
- Supporting research and political efforts to gain new insights and innovative solutions to health problems impacting women.

In promoting health and wellness on HIV/AIDS in a foremost manner, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc established an International Day of Service (IDS) to be held in March of each year. On that day, the 900 plus Delta chapters in America and abroad present conventional and innovative programming initiatives to educate men, women and children on HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention, provide testing, raise funds for research and services, and petition policymakers in an effort to win the battle against HIV/AIDS. Although this is a designated time and directive, chapters conduct these types of activities throughout the year.

Furthermore, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc brings a profound interest in and commitment to the preservation, protection, nurturing and education of young African American men. Studies have shown that one of the most important factors in the success of the young black male is his relationship with his mother or other important female figures in his life. As a national service Sorority made up of more than 200,000 college educated, predominantly African American women, one of Delta's objectives is to develop and implement, through its Summit III initiative, programs that focus on education, housing, employment and personal development for boys ranging from 10-16 years old.

In addition, in February 1985, Delta Sigma Theta launched a massive "Just Say No to Drugs" campaign with its undergraduate chapters to help black youth "Just Say No" to drugs. Initially, thirty-five chapters served as pilot sites to begin implementation. The project is conducted nation-wide by many Delta undergraduate chapters. The project is targeted for youth 7-15 years of age. The Delta "Just Say No" campaign is unique in several ways. It is conducted totally by members of college-based chapters and it was the first "Just Say No" project to be implemented by a national organization. Funding was received from the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the Office of Minority Health Concerns, both of which were agencies of the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

The Delta Alcohol, Drug Abuse and AIDS Community Education Project (ADACE) is another program designed to enable the Sorority to assume a leadership role in alcohol, drug abuse and AIDS awareness, treatment and prevention. The target population group for the project is African American females between the ages of 12-19. Delta launched this community education effort due to the increased risk African American women, especially younger women, face in becoming infected with HIV/AIDS and the heightened threat that young African American females will become alcohol and drug abusers.

HIV/AIDS is invading and destroying healthy individuals and families of people of color throughout the United States and the world in disproportionate numbers. The need for cross-disciplinary collaboration has become more evident over the course of the drug abuse and HIV/AIDS epidemics, not only because their interrelationships have become increasingly complex but also because we are witnessing an epidemiological synergy of drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, and other serious blood-borne diseases (such as hepatitis B and C viruses). Therefore, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. reaffirms its commitment to HIV/AIDS prevention and education campaigns. The Sorority further urges other organizations in the African American community and other communities of color to conduct similar campaigns. In addition, the Sorority urges lawmakers at every level of government to fully fund programs for research, prevention and the expansion of access to medical care for the treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS for African Americans and

communities of color throughout the world. The work of the Sorority on this issue truly reflects the theme of its national Social Action Commission, "Social Action: It's Personal, It's Local, It's Global".